

# THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF  
ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS  
(Section of the Library Association)

HON. EDITOR: W. B. STEVENSON  
(Hornsey Public Libraries)

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## The Library Assistant Announcements

THE Revised By-laws, which were approved by the L.A. Council at their last meeting, will be circulated to all members about the middle of May with the agenda for the Annual Meeting of the L.A. at Liverpool. Members are strongly urged to give the proposed new by-laws their very serious consideration.

The A.A.L. Council is meeting on the 10th May, after which it is expected that a statement defining their attitude to the by-laws will be issued. If it is decided to hold a ballot of the members, this will be conducted immediately in order that the views of the Section as a whole may be ascertained prior to the Annual Meetings of the Section and of the L.A. on the 7th and 15th June respectively.

The programme of the Section's Annual Meeting at Dagenham on the 7th June is enclosed as an inset with the Annual Report, which is being sent out with this issue. Members who have not received a copy should notify the Hon. Secretary immediately.

We, the scrutineers appointed to supervise the election of an Honorary Editor of THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT for 1939, hereby declare that we have counted the ballot papers returned and certify that the result of the ballot is as follows :

1,371 valid papers were received and counted.

12 papers were disqualified.

33 papers were received too late and not counted.

The valid votes were cast as follows :

R. L. W. Collison	.	.	.	440
J. Hammond	.	.	.	212
H. Jolliffe	.	.	.	164
W. B. Stevenson	.	.	.	555

Mr. W. B. Stevenson is hereby declared elected to the office of Honorary Editor for 1939.

Signed { G. W. Horner.  
J. L. Gilliam.  
M. A. Cole.

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The Kent Sub-Branch invite London librarians and assistants to attend their May meeting, which will be held at the new Central Library, Beckenham Road, Beckenham, on *Thursday*, 25th May, at 3 p.m.

The Mayor of Beckenham (Mr. Alderman Frank Healey, J.P.) will welcome the guests and entertain them to tea. The Chairman of the Library Committee (Alderman Dr. J. H. Bennett) will take the chair at the meeting, which will be addressed by Mr. W. C. Berwick Sayers, F.L.A.

There will be an opportunity to inspect the Library, and the Borough Librarian (Mr. J. L. Wilson, F.L.A.) hopes to arrange for a short programme of films to be shown.

Members intending to be present and to stay to tea should inform the Hon. Secretary (E. Wisker, County Branch Library, Gillingham, Kent) by Saturday, 20th May.

## LIBRARY ASSOCIATION SUMMER SCHOOL, 1939

### *Preliminary Announcement*

The Tenth Annual Summer School of Librarianship, arranged by the Library Association in co-operation with the University of Birmingham and the Birmingham Public Libraries Committee, will be held in Birmingham from 14th to 26th August, 1939.

Students will reside at Chancellor's Hall (a University Hall of Residence), Edgbaston, Birmingham. The Hall stands in extensive grounds which include lawns and gardens, hard tennis courts, putting greens, fives courts, etc. All amenities at the Hall will be at the disposal of Students. Charges for board residence will be £4 16s. for the period of the School; £2 10s. for one week; 9s. 6d. per day.

The fee for instruction will be 15s. for the fortnight period; 10s. for a period of one week; 2s. for day courses.

The Scheme for Studies will be based on the syllabus of the Library Association and will include:

Bibliography and Book Selection; Classification; Cataloguing; Library Administration, including Children's Libraries and Commercial and Technical Libraries; County Libraries; Special Libraries; Library Planning; Printing; Bookbinding; Palæography and Archive Science.

Lectures will be held during the morning sessions, and demonstrations, practical work, and visits to libraries of different types, book binderies, printing and process-printing establishments will be arranged for the afternoon sessions.

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Further details will be announced shortly.

Enquiries should be addressed to :

The Honorary Secretary,  
Library Association Summer School,  
Reference Library,  
Birmingham, 1.



A film that should interest our readers will shortly be released, and is to be shown in London at the Tatler, commencing 1st May. It is entitled "The Great library misery," and concerns the struggles of an infuriated citizen to become a member of a library. He wants a book by James Hilton, but before he can ask for it he is confronted by a mile of red tape, an ocean of forms to be filled in, and a librarian bent on observing the rules. This useful and amusing visual supplement to Mr. Collison's recent article will, we hope, not be neglected by librarians.



## Commercial and Technical Libraries<sup>1</sup>

HAROLD JOLLIFFE, F.L.A.

ONE of the most interesting and significant features of modern library practice is the growth and development of the specialized department. It is one of these, namely, the Commercial and Technical Department, which I intend to make the subject of my address to you to-day. As yet, with a few notable exceptions, only the largest cities of this country possess libraries of this kind, and although my words will bear principally on the ordinary work and activities of such a library, I hope that what I have to say will in some small measure both justify their existence, and at the same time, perhaps, afford some inspiration to those who are about to inaugurate them. Generally speaking, in this highly industrialized country, there are few towns of any size which have not to do with the subjects of commerce and technology. Details of supply and demand vary, for instance, in a seaport and an inland industrial town, but the necessity for a library which is specially designed for the purpose of serving the business world is always a constant factor.

<sup>1</sup> Chairman's address to the East Midland Division of the A.A.L., Annual General Meeting, Nottingham, 19th January, 1939.

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In the largest towns, the subjects of commerce and technology are often treated separately, but in the course of this address I shall continue to deal with them as a single department, as I am of the opinion that, at any rate for some years to come, this will prove the more convenient method for most authorities.

In the planning of the Department, most of the usual laws obtain relative to general library planning, but there are one or two points worthy of special mention. Firstly, it should be situated as near as possible to the centre of the industrial community. In the majority of cases, the Central Library is so placed, but in the event of this not being so, other accommodation should be sought. Wherever possible, housing in the Central Library is preferred, in order to avoid overlapping of stock. A large, well-lit room should be chosen, with easy access from the street. Furniture should include a number of large flat tables suitable for directory and map users and a few students' tables, placed well away from the door, for obvious reasons. Free access to the stock should be afforded to readers as far as possible, and formalities such as form-filling and checking-in should be reduced to a minimum. In short, the library should be laid out with the sole end in view of service, and service as quickly as possible.

I see that in my notes I have placed under the heading of Staff the single word "enough." Now I do not mean to infer that every borrower should be allowed to monopolize the attention of a member of the staff for as long as he or she chooses, but there should be no irksome waiting on the part of readers, if it can be avoided. The assistant-in-charge, at the very least, should be specially trained, and the remaining members of the staff should possess some knowledge of reference work. They should be encouraged to read, or scan quickly at any rate, as many newspapers and periodicals as possible, and to take every opportunity of becoming acquainted with the stock in general. This applies especially to the directory collection. The object of this is again speed, for as most commercial librarians know only too well, an enquirer usually wants something in a hurry, and he objects most strongly to being kept waiting. If it is at all possible, the librarian should be given a free hand in the running of the Department, subject of course to the direction of his chief, for if he has been chosen wisely, much expense and labour will be saved, and the service will be improved all round.

And now I come to the question of the stock of the Commercial and

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Technical Library, the question which will occupy the greater part of this paper. Obviously, wise book selection will play a big part in the future success of the Department. The chief point about the purchase of books is undoubtedly summed up in the term "quick buying," for with commercial and technical works it is essential that they should be on the shelves as soon as they are published. Standing orders should be given for all annual publications taken, thus ensuring this, whilst if other books can be supplied on approval so much the better. In searching for additions to the stock, I find that the golden rule is to go straight to the immediate authority for whatever is wanted. Most commercial and technical journals contain book reviews, and to me it seems quite clear that the most valuable review of a book on the subject of engineering will most probably be found in the periodical of the same name. It should be the special job of a responsible assistant to go religiously through the periodicals taken week by week, for not everything that is of value to the Department appears in the ordinary publishing journals. Much good material is to be had free for the asking, and if a circular letter is despatched to the publisher of the book or pamphlet, he is usually only too pleased to send a copy to the library. A particularly good example of this type of book is the recently published West Cumberland survey of industrial facilities.

For the purpose of this address I propose to divide the stock into four sections: books, periodicals, maps, and miscellaneous material. The first thing to be done when the new department is formed, is to transfer the relevant stock to the room chosen, and then proceed to revise carefully, filling in obvious gaps, replacing old with new editions, and all the time bearing in mind the relationship between the Department and local requirements. Subsequently, it is a matter for keeping constant watch, and adding to the stock whatever is needed. I have not the time at my disposal to deal with the book stock section by section, but I can comment on one or two of the more important ones. Firstly, let us consider the directory collection, which necessarily will play a large part in the commercial section of the library. As many as possible should be taken as issued, if funds will allow, but expense may be saved if those not in great demand are bought only in alternate editions. The United Kingdom should be covered thoroughly, together with the principal trades and professions and the more important foreign countries. A useful point to remember here is that many of the smaller directories and year books can be obtained free of charge. It will be found more convenient to arrange this particular collection quite apart

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from the general stock. A running number may be given to each, and this, together with an index of the visible display variety, is quite sufficient in the way of classification.

A very valuable sideline may be developed by obtaining the publications of the various professional and trade societies.

These are of two varieties, those which must be paid for, usually in the form of a subscription, and those which can be obtained free of charge. Of the former, two examples chosen at random are the publications of the British Association for the Advancement of Science and those of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. Of the Associations which will usually present their material to the library the Cement and Concrete Association and the London Shellac Research Bureau are good examples.

Finally, the Department should take as many Government publications as possible, the cost of these being usually small, especially when one considers the good discount available. Annual reports of the various Government Departments, special bulletins such as those published by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and the excellent reports issued by the Colonial Office and the Department of Overseas Trade should most certainly be included in the stock.

The periodicals collection may usefully be subdivided into three main classes, namely, ordinary periodicals, house journals, and journals issued by Chambers of Commerce. Ordinary periodicals, for most of which payment must be made, should represent all the main industries of the country, together with the more important branches of commerce, particular attention being paid, of course, to local demand.

House journals, or house organs as they are sometimes called, form a second line of defence in the periodicals collection and can usually be obtained free on request from the publishers. In general, they are of three kinds, firstly, those issued by a firm for the benefit of its staff; secondly, those issued by a firm for the purpose of publicity, in other words to bring before those likely to be interested details of their latest machinery, new developments, etc., and lastly, those published by a group or association of firms who wish to place on record recent activities and developments in a particular branch of industry. It is obvious that the last two varieties are the more valuable so far as we are concerned, and indeed they are often very useful, for in many cases they cover subjects much better than the ordinary journal. Good examples of house journals are the *Nickel bulletin*, issued by the Mond Nickel Company, the *Beetle magazine*, a publication of British

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Industrial Plastics, and lastly, the *Monthly bulletin* of the British Roads Federation.

My last subdivision of the periodicals collection is made up of the journals issued by the various Chambers of Commerce. Here again, a courteous letter usually succeeds in evoking a response which will do much towards lessening the cost of this branch of the service. *Sell's telegraphic addresses* and Kelly's *Merchants, manufacturers, and shippers*, contain lists of British and foreign chambers respectively, and it will be found that the more important ones issue a monthly, weekly, or quarterly journal, plus an annual report. These publications are of the utmost value, containing as they do, not only lists of members (incidentally a useful supplement to the directories collection), but also much information on the trade of the district from which they emanate. Good examples of this type of periodical are issued from London, Paris, New York, and Melbourne, Australia.

The third section of the stock, i.e. the maps collection, can be a very expensive item, and for this reason it sometimes receives rather scant attention. If, however, one has cultivated what is usually referred to as the "gentle art of cadging," it is possible to build up a reasonably useful stock of maps fairly cheaply. In addition to standard atlases covering the whole world, Ordnance Survey maps, drawn to a fairly large scale, of the town and country should be taken. It will be found, however, that street maps of cities and towns in the United Kingdom are in constant demand, and although Kelly's cover the largest of these in their directories, others are not so easily come by. One of the best methods of solving this problem, and a method which possesses the added attraction of being comparatively inexpensive, is to abstract the plans from the guide books which are distributed free by most authorities in this country. Admittedly, they are often small, but if used in conjunction with the directory and the sketch plans found in the principal road books, they usually answer the purpose.

In my last division of the stock, which I have called miscellaneous material, I propose to deal only with two particular varieties—trade catalogues and clippings. Trade catalogues are those publications issued by industrial concerns describing their products and they may range from single leaflets to volumes comprising hundreds of pages. Although these may be classed by an antagonistic critic as pure advertising matter, their value to a specialized department of this kind is enormous. They are constantly being brought up to date by the manufacturers who sponsor them,



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and if the collection is well compiled they can be made to furnish details on practically every branch of technology. There are a number of ways of building up such a collection. Editors of many trade papers are often willing to insert an announcement free of charge ; Chambers of Commerce will in many instances give what help they can ; but inevitably, the best way is by personal request to the individual firms. First, circularize the important firms in the principal industries, and then build up the collection systematically by keeping track of the catalogues as they are issued and writing for those that are required. Useful lists of catalogues are given as they are published in most trade papers such as *Engineering*, *Mechanical world*, and the *Textile manufacturer*. As they are received, the publications should be acknowledged, fully catalogued and classified according to the schemes in use in the Department, and then separate shelving accommodation should be found for the bound volumes and a vertical file prepared to receive those in pamphlet form.

Clippings, concerning the value of which there has been a certain amount of controversy, are, actually speaking, extracts and cuttings taken from a variety of sources, such as periodicals, newspapers, etc. In practice, however, the clippings' file, which may be housed vertically or in pamphlet boxes, can serve as a storehouse for much more material, such as ordinary pamphlets of an ephemeral kind and notes on queries that have been answered in the past. As I said before, opinions differ as to the value of this particular branch of the service, the chief point of its critics being the very great amount of labour involved, but I believe myself that if the time can be spared, such a collection can be of definite value.

Now I have dealt with the stock at such length because it is so obviously important. Before I go on to what will be the last portion of my address I would like to sum up very briefly. The main object in view of those responsible for the building up of the stock in a Commercial and Technical Library is to cover every possible line of approach. This in other words means, that whatever question is asked, whether the information is recent or not, the Department will be able to produce what is required. Thus, our defences are as follows : first, the main book stock, comprising representative works on every subject that is likely to be required ; secondly, the periodicals collection, supplementing the general stock and bringing it up to date ; and lastly, a host of fugitive matter, classified minutely, elastic, and capable of extensive revision.

Before I attempt to make my concluding remarks, I wish to say a few

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words on the allied subjects of co-operation and publicity. Let us take the question of publicity first. I think it should be obvious that a certain amount of this is vitally necessary. The means to be adopted are, generally speaking, much the same as in other departments of the service. Displays, posters, etc., are very useful. A descriptive leaflet, circulated amongst the business men and manufacturers of the town, will undoubtedly prove of value. Indeed, every branch of publicity used by lending and reference librarians will play its part in bringing the activities and resources of the Department to the notice of the right people. Allied to this business of publicity is the question of co-operation. The value of co-operation to the Commercial and Technical Department, and through it, of course, to the business world, cannot be underestimated. The local Chamber of Commerce is probably the most important factor, but other forces play their part. It should be the aim of the Commercial and Technical Librarian to link up all available sources of information, in order to ensure that what he cannot provide himself may be obtained elsewhere. As yet we have gone only a certain way in this direction and we have much to do. An interesting experiment has been tried at Sheffield, where the whole resources of a number of special and factory libraries are at the immediate disposal of the reader. Developments on these lines will be one of the big problems to be solved in the future.

But I have already exceeded the time which I had allowed myself, and I must conclude this somewhat rambling discourse. One thing, however, I hope I have made clear. The Commercial and Technical Library is vitally necessary. It may be suggested in many cases that the cost is too great. I cannot go into this question as I would like for a variety of reasons, but I will say this—the cost need not be too great if care is taken. It is the practice of librarians, when a demand for a certain type of literature is making itself felt, to do everything in their power to satisfy it. For many years now, the demand for up-to-date commercial and technical information has been growing. I submit that we have not attempted to fulfil this demand as we ought, and the result has been that a large section of the community, a section, moreover, which would have been helpful and sympathetic towards our aims and ideals, has been hitherto lost to us.

Only the future can show us whether we have done all we ought in this respect. The business of organizing and administering a Commercial and Technical Library is not an easy one and the dividends paid are not often easily counted. Once started, such a library is a full-time job, and the

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librarian cannot afford to mark time or ease up in any direction. He too must join the travellers to Samarkand and echo the cry :

*"We are the pilgrims, Master,  
We shall go always a little further."*

## Lectures for Children—Are They Worth While?<sup>1</sup>

DOROTHY L. WHYMAN, B.A., F.L.A.

WHEN, with misguided if well-meant zeal, I undertook to conduct this questionnaire on children's lectures, I did not contemplate having to give a paper, however inadequate, on a subject which has hitherto roused my emotions rather than my reason. My intention was to compile, from the answers I received, if any, a few neat rows of figures and percentages, which could be quickly read out, easily ignored, and immediately forgotten. This idea, however, was gently brushed aside by the Secretary, who asked me in the first place not to include too many figures, and secondly to make the paper interesting. With the first part of her request I whole-heartedly comply; the second, as Erasmus observed when asked to write "In praise of folly," is "like setting a camel to dance."

I should like to make it clear, in the first place, that as we are not this afternoon considering the story hour proper, or any informal talks by the Children's Librarian, but lectures, recitals, and talks given by outside lecturers, and also talkies and silent films, any derogatory remarks which I may make must not be taken as applying to story hours, whose value in library work with children is, I think, unquestioned. The same cannot be said of the activities we are considering: in fact, out of the total number of Children's Librarians who answered the question, "Do you consider that under your present system lectures for children are worth while?" one-third returned an unqualified "No," while only one-third were unreservedly in their favour. All these libraries, it may be added, provide lectures for children.

It should be noted that the question purposely read, "Do you consider

<sup>1</sup> A paper read to a meeting of the Association of Children's Librarians, 22nd March, 1939.

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that *under your present system* lectures for children are worth while ? " and before we go further it would be well briefly to examine those systems as far as we can from the available data. I must therefore ask you to bear with me while I recapitulate what you probably all already know.

In the view of a Library Committee, the minimum requirements for holding these entertainments for children are space and time, not, as might be expected, ability to purchase suitable equipment and pay competent lecturers. Almost the only reason for not holding them is that the Children's Library cannot be adapted, and there is no alternative accommodation. The use of the Children's Library even means in a few cases that it has to be specially closed for ordinary use, which seems an unwarrantable infringement on the convenience of the members. A number of libraries overcome this difficulty by holding lectures when the Children's Library is normally shut, usually on early-closing day, which seems an equally unwarrantable infringement on the liberty of the Children's Librarian. This brings us to the question of time : at the least the lecture must be arranged and supervised, and usually there is a considerable amount of other work involved. Tickets must be prepared and either sent or given out, reading lists must be made, posters, reports, and programmes drawn up, and statistics kept, and all this fills time which the Children's Librarian must take from her other work.

In one particular she is sometimes spared, though this is where her services would seem to be indispensable, and that is in choosing the lectures. This is in most cases done by the Chief Librarian, though the Children's Librarian is sometimes consulted, and in a few cases has the responsibility of choosing alone. Here another factor is involved—money, or rather, usually, the lack of it. According to the Library Act it is not permissible to include among expenses the cost of lectures. In many districts, however, this item, if reasonably (or perhaps from our point of view unreasonably) small, is allowed by the auditors. The most usual way of overcoming this difficulty is to defray such costs out of the receipts from fines, etc., and this is a fairly common practice with regard to adult lectures. Under these circumstances the library must economize somewhere, and it is frequently the children's lectures which suffer. It is possible in many districts to find sufficient unpaid speakers to make quite an imposing list. Where unpaid speakers are not available most libraries are prepared to pay expenses, but will not offer a reasonable fee ; indeed I know of only two who are prepared to do this for a children's lecture. The majority have or hire a film projector or

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lantern, but comparatively few provide a gramophone, wireless, or epidiascope, though the last has great possibilities in this kind of work. Except in a large library system, the cost of these items is at present prohibitive.

That is one side of the account. We spend a considerable amount of valuable time hiring out films and engaging our lecturers and inviting our children—why? What do we hope to achieve by it all? Mr. Sayers has no doubt on the subject. He declares roundly in his book on *Children's Libraries*, "The purpose of the library lecture is to inculcate successful reading habits" (p. 192), and again, "It can never be too often repeated that this is our first as it is our final purpose" (p. 206). I hesitate to cross swords with Mr. Sayers, but is it? Does a lecture on "How I rode up Box Hill on a tandem" foster a love of books? Do we really ask Mary and Peter to watch a film of beans growing in order to inculcate more successful reading habits? No doubt this should be, and in theory is, the purpose of all our extension activities, but in practice our aims are more complex. Publicity is the underlying purpose of most library lectures, and the one that carries most weight with the local authority, and the librarian provides the best he can from his limited funds from a pardonable desire to please the Committee, and possibly to amuse the children. Our purpose is then fourfold—how much do we achieve?

Let us consider the minor points first. If attendance figures are any criterion, we manage to amuse the children. It is with much trepidation that I venture to introduce these figures, but they vary from 75 per cent. to 93 per cent., with an average of over 85 per cent., which shows that the audiences, unless terrorized into coming by their teachers, are fairly content.

Secondly, we please the Committee by asking those of them who are not capable of presiding at adult lectures to take the chair for the children. At least we presume we please them—there are no relevant figures available.

But these are comparatively unimportant points. Let us examine the publicity value of these lectures. Obviously, this varies with their intrinsic worth and our method of advertisement, but depends more on the former than finance committees would have us believe. Posters are commonly used in the library, though not often outside it, but most libraries publish printed programmes, which attract attention. The Press is also useful here; many libraries send reports or announcements to their local paper, and receive notice which they would not otherwise get. Where tickets are sent to the schools, the attention of staff and children is drawn to the library, and many who come to listen come again with tickets to join. This is

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specially the case where the lectures are held in the children's room, or near it, so that strangers can see how attractive it is.

On these three counts, then, we find that children's lectures, whatever their quality, are fairly successful. Children and Committees are apparently easily pleased, and clever boosting can get results which more modest merit might fail to achieve. But when we come to what Mr. Sayers calls our first and final purpose, the encouragement of good reading, the situation is very different.

In the average case, children's lectures and films are chosen by a busy man with no money to spare, to whom they are much less important than the adult lectures. His only guides are inadequate synopses or prospectuses, and probably a list of local worthies who must be asked from habit. If he has any money to spend at all, it must be spread out over as many lectures as possible, so as to make a long list, so that other considerations must give way to cheapness. Obviously, very few first-class lecturers can give their services for one and threepence an evening, or whatever their expenses may be, so that the thrifty library is fortunate if the lecturer is even competent or his slides visible, while often his subject is merely propaganda or advertisement. It is indeed extremely difficult to find suitable subjects for children's lectures, and this objection applies more particularly to films; the general level of those on hire is deplorably low, and often totally unsuitable for library work. The majority of them are biological or geographical in content, and while possibly providing entertainment for the children, unless they have already seen them at school, give them no encouragement to read.

Where, of course, there is any opportunity, reading-lists and exhibitions of relevant books are of the greatest value, but in nine cases out of ten the subject is so specialized or the title so misleading that few or no books can be safely listed. I know of one case where a film called "The Red army" was assumed to deal with Soviet Russia, and it occasioned some bewilderment among the audience when it was found to be about the extermination of bugs! Which goes to show that in the case of films it is better to play for safety. But often, when a subject is quite clear and straightforward, one cannot find enough books to warrant a list. How do such lectures or films promote successful reading habits? It might be argued that the child's mind is being improved, but it is not our business to improve it in this way—we are concerned with books. An increasing number of people grow up every year who cannot take in the written word, but must have everything in the form of pictures, with a minimum of letter-

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press. The type of child who can watch a film or slides with interest because they are pictures may not enjoy or be capable of reading anything but comic papers or the "Thanks to Horlick's" type of advertisement—how is what Virginia Woolf calls "this vain and vicious system of lecturing" to help him to grow out of this phase? How could it help anyone? You know the story of the new lecturer, and the three points about his lecture: "in the first place he read it, in the second place he read it very badly, and in the third place it wasn't worth reading." Why have we to put up with that sort of thing?

The chief reason is that Committees like to publish lists of children's lectures and make often fatuous remarks before and after them, when they preside, but since they consider them almost entirely from the point of view of their publicity value, are not prepared to take the necessary steps that would enable them to pay for the right speakers. There are honourable exceptions, of course, but I refer to the majority. It would be difficult to convince them that their policy is misguided, because in things of this kind your results are intangible. The Committee sees no difference between 180 children coming to hear Councillor X on his trip to the Lakes, and 180 children coming to hear Mrs. Williams Ellis, for instance, except that the first would cost nothing but the lighting and heating of the hall, and from our point of view would be dear at that. The real effects of these things are gradual, and their value cannot be measured in figures. But I submit that if our purpose is to encourage good reading (and after all what else do we work for?) we are not realizing it, or achieving results of any kind commensurate with the work entailed. Indeed, lectures and films, divorced as they so often are from books and reading, are more likely to produce a race of film fans and comic-strip enthusiasts. We may gain a few new readers, we may issue a few railway books after a lecture on railways, we may gain some publicity for the Children's Library, we may give the children an hour's amusement, but are these things worth the trouble involved? We are using a sieve where we should have a bucket, and the few drops of water we catch only show what we could do with better tools.

After all, we do not fill the library with second-rate books because they are cheap: why should we have second-rate lectures? If we cannot do the thing properly, why not let it go, and devote our energies to story hours? In most districts the system of children's lectures is at present a farce. But I am convinced that if our lectures and films were carefully chosen (the

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Children's Librarian ought always to be consulted, if only because she has to sit through them) and the lecturers adequately paid, and the fullest possible use were made of all means of advertising, and of connecting the lecture and the books concerning it, their value both in developing a child's interest in books and attracting the right kind of child to the library would be enormous. But here, as in our book selection, we must keep up a good standard. It is no good our being complacent about our attendance figures. Most children will come to see anything free—once. If we have 100 per cent. attendance at each show and it is not worth listening to we are wasting our time, and time, as you all know, is too valuable a commodity in a Children's Library to be wasted.

## Valuations

R. L. W. COLLISON

THE distinguished contribution of the great printing firms of to-day to the development of better typography is shared by *Linotype*, which has for some time concentrated on making its clients "print conscious." Most librarians have probably noticed *Linotype's* full-page advertisement in the *Bookseller* and other periodicals: in addition to this outside publicity a house-organ, called *Linotype matrix*, is issued quarterly, and may be had for the asking from Linotype and Machinery Limited, 9 Kingsway, W.C.2. Recent Linotype publicity includes *The Printed word*, an attractive introduction to the process, types, and range of Linotype, and *Emblems and Electra*, in which Dwiggin's drawings and Benet's verses from the *Saturday review of literature* are charmingly reprinted in Dwiggin's own Electra type. Two outstanding pamphlets have been published by Linotype during recent years: a Calendar in which are reproduced woodcuts from Kerver's twelfth-century *Book of hours*, the type used being the beautiful and very suitable Benedictine; the other, a reprint, in Bodoni, of Goldsmith's *Deserted village*, with Bewick's engravings. Either of these productions might rank with many a "private press" edition, and *Linotype* is evidently doing much to improve the standard of printing.

The use of Bodoni as in the above edition and by such a notable firm as Faber & Faber might well be copied by public libraries whose publications rarely appear in anything more daring than the ubiquitous Gill Sans. Colour, however, is already here, and *Bethnal Green* and *Derbyshire*



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have each produced catalogues which are in the very first rank of library publicity. *Bethnal Green's* long-awaited "Books of 1938" appears with a well-designed two-colour line block for its cover, the contents being printed in Plantin and the headings in Rockwell Shadow. The paper is good, the dialogue which conceals the titles and subjects of books excellent, and the resultant feeling somewhat as follows: (1) What a pity that such a fine piece of publicity is limited to Bethnal Green, when its publication co-operatively (with, of course, the consent of its writer, Mr. Snaith) would do so much to help libraries in general; (2) Is the late date of publication (March, if *The Times literary supplement* is to be believed) warranted by the undoubted *finish* of the contents, or would a shorter and more punctual selection of last year's books have been equally successful?

*Derbyshire* has achieved the incredible: a three-colour (and very charming) illustration from Demuth's *Trudi and Hansel* for its "Books for boys and girls, 1938-39"; each section has a black-and-white illustration from *Rabier's thirty fables*. *Derbyshire* has long been famous for its choice of books for children, so that the only criticism left is a slight objection to the rather ugly heavy type in which each title is set. The *Modern infant school*, issued by the same library, has a charming half-tone block (borrowed from the magazine *Parents*) on a well-planned cover to a list which seems to touch on most aspects of teaching.

*Hornsey*, like perhaps many other libraries, has solved the difficulty of running a bulletin as well as the co-operative *Recommended books* by inserting a neatly printed list of other recent additions in each copy of the latter. *Beckenham* opened its new Central Library in March with a straightforward but illustrated "Handbook": a photograph in the *Municipal journal* shows a plain and rather pleasing building (Architects, Messrs. Gold & Aldridge), whose capacity, however, seems extremely small, the Lending Library holding only 8,000 volumes. A rather similar "Handbook" comes from *Hutchin*, where the shelves from floor to ceiling and books in boxes have given place to an up-to-date service.

The American scene is particularly in evidence this month and reminds me that we no longer have those interesting articles on American libraries which appeared in the *ASSISTANT* once a quarter. The Office of Education of the U.S. Department of the Interior has issued a report on Professional Library Education, which is well written and well illustrated, besides containing some surprises for English readers. Out of thirty thousand librarians

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employed in 1930 only two and a half thousand were men. Salaries seem much the same as in England, commencing salaries for graduate students ranging upwards from \$400, while the highest reported salary is \$10,000 for the chief librarian of a large system. The report consists of seventy-five pages, and is well worth reading in full—price 15 cents from U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington. The *A.L.A. bulletin* is to be congratulated on the distinguished layout of its new cover, the work of Mr. Elmer Loemker, in which approachability is achieved with restraint in a three-colour design with dignified lettering.

*Toronto* has issued an adolescent list on Biography and Travel with an attractive three-colour story map as a cover. The annotations are a little stiff: for instance, "The Life and customs of the central eskimo, followed through the four seasons, by one who has lived with them," would hardly make a child want to read Bilby's *Nanook of the north*, but the presentation of titles and bibliographical details is inviting and space is generously allotted throughout.

The *Enoch Pratt* Library issues publicity faster than I can review it, and among the enormous and welcome batch of material received this month there is space to mention only a few of its contents. "Understanding music" has a charming decoration from Marcia Davenport's *Mozart*, while such lists as "The Great thousand years" (Middle Ages), "Mountains and men," "The quills of satire," "War in Asia," etc., each have their own well-chosen format and especial appeal.

English libraries have sent a remarkable amount of well-produced material: perhaps *Tottenham's* duplicated list of Deutsche Bücher is as original as any, for the entire contents are written in German, and the selection of books a wide one although it incomprehensibly lacks a few names of international prominence such as Broch, Hauser, and Rilke. *Bristol* sends another detailed bibliography, this time of Guy N. Pocock, in connexion with his lecture on Kenneth Graham. *Leyton* continues its campaign of telling the public what it should know with an exceedingly charming pamphlet for children in which a few rules are simply told.

A newcomer to our list of publicists is *Northamptonshire*, which publishes a readable bulletin comprising notes, recent additions, and a schedule of van exchanges. *Gillingham* sends an attractive duplicated Introduction to the Library Service for the school-leavers; I find it unbelievable that Gillingham is the only branch in Kent to produce bulletins and I appeal to

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other Kent branches to forward their publications so that this impression may be corrected.

Now *Arbroath*, a town of 18,000 population, requires more detailed treatment: printing is beyond its means, a duplicator not obtainable, so *Arbroath* types ten copies of its "Bulletin" and displays them in the various departments of the Library. Perhaps the effect has small result, but the fact that an effort is made to acquaint the public with its bookstock shows that *Arbroath*—like many other small libraries—is willing to adopt modern methods when many a larger library in similar circumstances would say that it was impossible. *Blyth* displays a like determination: its latest annual report was printed (in a neat and workmanlike fashion) at a cost of 45s. for 500 copies. A census of public opinion on fiction was taken, and a basic list of one hundred novelists prepared from its results: this will be used as a guide in future book purchase. Book fund stands at £750 (with an extra £200 for binding) as compared with a salary account of £643 for a staff of seven—an average of £92 each! This town of 34,000 population is evidently economizing on salaries, and its total issue of 235,000 is cheaply bought with an expenditure of £2,415.

The overwhelming proportion of the remaining bulletins come from the north: *Wakefield* starts the annual Cran-Middleton Fest with a duplicated list on a large number of aspects of gardening: the paper, a fine apple-green, requires, however, a darker ink than *Wakefield* could obtain. *York* has developed the duplicated list of three years ago into a solid quarterly bulletin whose layout could benefit from slightly more space between sections, while its type is too grey for the colour of the page: annotations are short, unambitious, but to the point and useful. *Sowerby Bridge* wisely keeps statistics of its expenditure on duplicated lists—too many libraries unwittingly spend more, in terms of staff time, on duplicated lists, than they would willingly afford to a printer—and finds that a double-sided foolscap sheet (folded once) costs 3s. 6d. in materials and one and half hours in staff time per 360 copies.

Both *Rugby* and *Lancashire* have issued "Books of 1938," *Rugby's* list being a charming selection in two shades of blue, and *Lancashire's* a merciless and technical-looking compilation of one hundred pages at an average of twelve titles per page. The effect, in Gill Sans, is monotonous, but to set against this is the amazing selection of books, which is, however, stronger on the practical than on the literary side.

*Dewsbury* has produced an excellent list of "A Hundred and one

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good books in the junior library," in the form of a six-page folder with a fairy-tale woodcut as decoration. A copy has been sent "to every child of reading age in our schools," and a competition concerning the most popular books is used as an additional bait! The same library's quarterly bulletin, "Flyleaf," is not as happily printed, the paper in particular being the worst kind obtainable, but improvements are promised in future issues.

*Stoke Newington* has issued a most amusing pamphlet to introduce children to the new Junior Library: the caricatures, whose author is unidentified apart from the initials *R. C.*, are effective, while the illustration of the Junior Library shows a pleasant room in the current style with a curious feature which may be misleading—steps either *up* to the exit or *down* from the entrance wickets! *Stretford's* "Bulletin," while attractively presented, is rather too crowded to achieve the best effect, while *Doncaster's* list of "Modern plays" lacks the best work of such well-known playwrights as Maxwell Anderson, Clifford Odets, Elmer Rice, and R. E. Sherwood. *Cambridgeshire* insists on the practice of underlining instead of a more imaginative use of capitals, but its bulletin of additions, which is produced under great difficulties, merits praise for its ten- to fifteen-word annotation for every title.

And now, apropos of nothing, perhaps I shall be forgiven for quoting without comment the disarming caption on the envelope of a well-known bookseller's list: *Exchange Metallic Dross for Mental Gold!*



## The Divisions

### DEVON AND CORNWALL

THE Devon and Cornwall Division held its spring meeting at Newton Abbot on Wednesday, 29th March, 1939, by kind invitation of the Newton Abbot Public Library Committee. About thirty-five members assembled at the Public Library for a brief tour of inspection before taking tea at the Courtney Restaurant.

Members then reassembled at the Public Library, and a formal address of welcome was given by the Chairman of the Public Library Committee, Miss I. K. Webster, who, in the course of her remarks, gave evidence of her consciousness of the work of the Division. The Chairman of the Division, Mr. I. W. J. Snook, made reply on behalf of members, noting with extreme

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satisfaction the attendance of members of the Book Selection Committee for the main address.

The Speaker was Mr. W. Best Harris (Plymouth City Libraries), who had chosen the title "Some special applications of book selection" for his address. From the outset, Mr. Best Harris dispelled any doubts as to the originality of his remarks, and proceeded to illustrate his contentions by a model scheme of branch libraries for a community of 200,000 people. He asked for courage in library planning in recognizing the need for small service units rather than large branch libraries, planning only one or two conveniently situated large branch libraries to satisfy needs intermediate to those supplied by the central library and the small branch. He stressed that the ultimate result would be the segregation of readers in stages of advancement, both in subject study and in general reading. Mr. Best Harris also referred to practical book selection and the need for closer co-operation between librarian and staff, and specialization in subject-book selection as a necessary duty of the latter.

An exceptionally vigorous discussion followed the speaker's summary remarks, and an alternative scheme of planning was supported by several members. The discussion was eventually closed by the action of the Chairman, and a vote of thanks to Mr. Best Harris was proposed by Mr. A. G. Evans (Barnstaple), and seconded by Mr. J. Bristow (Exeter).

### EASTERN

The Annual Business Meeting of the Division was held at Ipswich on Thursday, 16th March, when twenty-six members from Colchester, Ipswich, Lowestoft, Norwich, and the East Suffolk County Library were present.

After the reading of the minutes of the last meeting and the reports of the Hon. Treasurer, Secretary, and Divisional Representative, three members from Colchester each read a fifteen-minute paper, of which the first was "Hospital libraries," by Miss J. Osborn, A.L.A.

Miss Osborn described the Hospital Library service maintained at Colchester in co-operation with the Public Library, telling of her work in that connexion and giving practical details of the methods employed.

Mr. L. B. Saunders, B.A., followed with a paper on "The Location of books," being a criticism of the methods of classification and cataloguing used in many libraries, and offering recommendations for improved facilities for the guidance of readers.

Mr. C. Lee, in the third paper, "I'd rather pay tuppence," courageously

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advocated the policy of providing quantities of light fiction, after the manner of the popular circulating libraries, for the benefit of readers whose literary tastes are not advanced; maintaining that it is better to encourage these to read at all, than to try to "educate" them by giving them the books which the librarian might think they ought to read.

The short intervals between the papers were fully utilized by the members present for purposes of discussion, and the meeting concluded with hearty thanks to the speakers for their excellent papers.

### WESSEX

A meeting of the above Division was held at Portsmouth on Wednesday, 15th March. During the afternoon a record number of members had the opportunity of visiting the Dockyard, where a conducted tour of H.M.S. *Victory* was made. After tea the business meeting was held in the Guild Hall, under the Chairmanship of Mr. L. A. Burgess.

The following officers were elected for the ensuing year. *Chairman*: Mr. L. A. Burgess (Southampton). *Vice-Chairman*: Mr. A. Ll. Carver (Portsmouth). *Hon. Secretary*: Mr. L. E. Ives (Bournemouth). *Hon. Treasurer*: Mr. K. M. White (Bournemouth). *Committee*: Miss M. Rushton (Portsmouth), Messrs. G. E. White (Eastleigh), H. Johnstone (Poole), H. V. A. Bonny (Southampton), J. A. Austin (Bournemouth), W. G. Harris (Winchester).

The paper read at the meeting was entitled "Some famous reference works and their history," and was given by Mr. J. G. Ollé, of Portsmouth. In his paper, Mr. Ollé gave the meeting an interesting survey of the history of some famous reference books and their authors, including such works as Whitaker, Burke, Debrett, Bradshaw, and many others.

On behalf of the visiting members a vote of thanks was passed to the Portsmouth Staff for arranging such a successful meeting.

### LIBRARY ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REPORT

The Annual Report of the Library Association will be circulated with the May issue of the *Library Association Record*. Transitional members may obtain copies of the Report on application to the Secretary of the Library Association.

## Students' Problems: XVIII

D. H. HALLIDAY

**PRACTICAL CLASSIFICATION.**—It is rather an ordeal after sitting an examination to submit to an exhumation of the things we ought not to have done, but I heartily recommend it to those candidates who have previously failed in practical classification. Until last December I had been blissfully certain of my view that this paper was plain sailing to a student of fair accomplishment; but since examining copies of the placings submitted by some of my pupils, I have revised my opinion. That expresses far too mildly the shattering experience of seeing the constructive work of months reduced to an unbelievably futile and unreasoned examination performance. Clearly there must be some influence in the conditions of the examination which causes promising candidates to behave like novices.

The first of two main trends of ineptitude I have noticed is in the simple mechanics of applying the scheme, embodying such mistakes as 327.942 for 327.42, adding geographical divisions in defiance of Dewey's directions, or entering a book treating of two subjects under the containing head in direct contradiction of the rule. But the other failing is worse. It seems that the candidate in the examination room is so bewildered by the difficulties of the paper that all preparation and training are forgotten. The sole aim becomes a search for headings which appear to describe the book, however remotely. The favoured operation is simplicity itself—a prominent word from the title is looked up in the index and the book is placed at the number given—but *that* is not classification! Classification consists of judgment in placing a book where it will be most useful, while such a haphazard action is totally lacking in judgment. An apt illustration of that sort of mistake is the placing of a book on space-time under geometry merely because the title contains the words "fourth dimension," and the only reference in the D.C. index is to 513.8! Such an error would never occur if the classifier, with a complete realization of the book's subject, envisaged the book on the shelves of a library, examining the containing and surrounding classes to this end. Hence my suggestion of a reference to previous papers in order to avoid repeating such mistakes at the next examination.

Here are one or two other points concerning the practical paper which deserve careful attention from the Classification candidate:

In the directions at the head of the paper are two significant phrases

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which are rarely properly understood: "Candidates, if they desire, may give alternative class marks (Not cross references). The examiners will consider these conjointly—i.e. they will not necessarily award the appropriate marks for the most satisfactory of the alternatives but will take both into account." Despite this clear warning, there is a tendency to treat this as permission to give alternatives in a very haphazard fashion, foolishly regarding them as an insurance against error in a "hit or miss" technique. Now it is essential that any alternatives given be of definitely equal appeal in the eyes of the classifier at places where the book itself could be classed on the shelves. Each must be equally correct. If a book has an additional subject interest which is clearly subsidiary, that interest would be sufficiently indicated by a cross reference, which must not be given in the paper.

The regulations clearly state that alternative placings will be considered conjointly, and this means that, even though one correct placing be given, an incorrect alternative will lose marks. Indeed, I should imagine, it would be quite possible in such a case to lose *all* marks, since the obvious inference from a totally unreasonable alternative is that the candidate, incapable of real judgment, has arrived at the correct placing by chance alone.

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